

Office Paper Reduction Quick Tips

Offices are a prime target for waste production because they use a lot of paper. According to a study done by the City of Los Angeles, nearly 1.5 pounds of paper per person is used each day. The following ideas can help your business start using less paper and save money for your office. Why not try a few of these ideas and see how fast the savings add up?

For more information on the efficient use of resources in the office, check the business waste reduction publications available through the California Integrated Waste Management Board (CIWMB) by calling (916) 341-6363, by e-mail at bzassist@ciwmb.ca.gov, or by accessing the Board's business assistance Web site at www.ciwmb.ca.gov/BizWaste/.

Getting Started

Form a committee to plan and carry out the paper reduction campaign; include representatives from all levels of staff. The committee and staff should identify the different types of paper in the waste stream. See CIWMB Publication #500-94-004, "Reduce, Reuse, Recycle—It's Good Business! A Guide for California Businesses." With the information gathered, develop measurable goals.

Policy Considerations

Adopt a "Double-Sided" Policy. Consider adopting an organizational policy that will ensure all individual documents are printed on both sides of the page. For an example, see the CIWMB In-House Waste Prevention Policy #5, which is included in Publication #441-97-027, "Sample Waste Prevention Policy and Resolution." You may obtain the document in hard copy by calling (916) 341-6303, or online at www.ciwmb.ca.gov/bizwaste/officepaper/policy/htm.

Minor Handwritten Corrections Are OK.

Consider adopting an in-house policy allowing internal documents to be submitted with minor

legible handwritten corrections. Allow neat handwritten corrections and revisions. You can save time and paper by making a simple hand correction and by having several people review the same draft, rather than reprinting each successive draft.

Printing Improvements

Set Computer Defaults to Print Double-Sided.

Set up computer software for default two-sided printing including word processing, spreadsheets, electronic mail, and others.

Preview Documents Before Printing. Proofread documents on screen before printing. Don't forget to use the speller/grammar function to detect errors.

Print Only the Pages You Need. You just got back that 20-page report you wrote and there are changes to make on pages 2, 3, 4, 7, and 15. After making the changes, do you print out the whole document? If yes, consider instead printing only the pages you need. Most software programs provide this option under the print function. Consult your information management staff or your software guidebook if you are unsure of how to print selected document pages.

Print Envelopes Without Labels. Save the cost of buying mailing labels and eliminate the waste associated with those labels by printing addresses directly on envelopes. Most printers can easily print directly on a variety of envelopes. Educate employees on this printer function and keep instructions posted. Printing addresses directly on envelopes also maintains the recyclability of those envelopes, unlike "sticky" labels, which are a paper recycling contaminant. (For more information see "Pressure-Sensitive Adhesives, a Sticky Recycling Problem," at www.ciwmb.ca.gov/bizwaste/officepaper/PSAFacts.htm.)

Copying Tips

Practice Preventive Copier Maintenance. Keep copiers and printers in good repair and make it policy to only buy copiers and printers that make reliable double-sided copies. Let your copier maintenance person know when a copier is performing poorly (toner is low, jams frequently, etc.). Regular copier maintenance is important, especially if the toner is low. Many times copiers are used until all the toner is gone, and that wears down machines. A copier that works well is less likely to jam, and this helps save paper.

Fill Copier Trays Correctly. Yes, there is a right way to put paper into the copier. Before filling a copier paper tray, check the label on one end of the paper ream package. Look for an arrow pointing up and the words “copy this side first.” Put the paper in the copier so that this side is facing up. This will reduce jams. Note that when a paper ream does not have a label with arrows, you can perform a simple test to see which way the paper should be inserted. Hold the stack of paper at each end and note how it flops down. Turn the paper over and note again how it flops down. The side that has the greatest flop, or curve, faces upward in the paper tray.

Route Memos and Newsletters. Instead of making a copy for each person, route one copy around the office. Ask originators to send fewer copies to your office.

Creating Documents

Format Standard Forms for Paper Reduction. Reduce and double-side standard forms. When possible, automate standard forms as templates. Electronic forms are easier to use and eliminate the need for blank hard copy forms.

Shorten Documents. It costs about 5 cents to make an impression from your office photocopier. When you mail a document, it costs about 3.5 cents each page for first-class mail. Paper costs about 6 cents per page. Shorter documents save money. Make your writing as clear and concise as possible. Have someone else edit it. You can use smaller fonts or margins, but be careful not to compromise readability.

Use Revision Features in Word-Processing Software. Take advantage of onscreen editing features when making changes to draft documents, then send the new draft electronically.

Reuse

Format Standard Forms for Paper Reduction. Reduce paper and make double-sided copies of standard forms. When possible, create standard forms as templates. Electronic forms are easier to use and eliminate the need for blank hard copy forms.

Reduce

Send Information Electronically. Use e-mail for forms, document transmittals and faxes. Think carefully before printing electronic information. Organize and save it so it is easy to look up. This way you won’t need to make hard copy files of important information. Make backups on floppy disks regularly.

Reduce Unwanted Mail. Contact mail senders to take your company’s name off their mailing list or mark unwanted first-class mail “Refused, Return to Sender.” For more information, see CIWMB Publication #441-02-014, “Reducing Unsolicited Mail at Your Business.”

Eliminate Excess Mailings. Trim mailing lists used to send information to your customers. Give customers opportunities to indicate if and how often they want to receive information. Your customers will appreciate your efforts to minimize unwanted or duplicated mailings.

Educate Employees on the Benefits of Paper Reduction. Let employees know that their paper reduction efforts not only save paper, but they also save postage costs (from reduced mail volume) and storage space requirements. All these savings add to a leaner, more efficient office that benefits everyone.

Promote a “Think Before You Copy” Attitude. Workers should be encouraged to make sure they really need the copies they are making.

Post Paper Reduction Reminders by Printers and Copiers. Remind people to copy double-sided by posting reminders near the copiers, using interesting posters or entertaining slogans (“2 sides are better than one,” “Make a 2 (copies) for 1 (page) offer,” “Get a second impression,” etc.) and change them often to maintain interest. See the paper reduction campaign promotional materials available through the CIWMB at www.ciwmb.ca.gov/BizWaste/OfficePaper/Promote.htm.

Consider Formalizing your Efforts in a Paper Reduction Campaign. Make the campaign complete with slogans and a kick-off event.

Include representatives from management and all levels of staff, decide priorities, develop measurable goals, and set a timeline for implementation. See the CIWMB business waste reduction fact sheet “Create a Paper Reduction Campaign In Your Office,” Publication #441-97-018, for more information.

CIWMB publications are available online at www.ciwmb.ca.gov/Publications/ or by calling (916) 341-6306 or 1-800-CA-WASTE. If you have questions, information, ideas, educational materials, etc., please e-mail us at bzassist@ciwmb.ca.gov or call (916) 341-6363.

The energy challenge facing California is real. Every Californian needs to take immediate action to reduce energy consumption. For a list of simple ways you can reduce demand and cut energy costs, **Flex Your Power** and visit www.consumerenergycenter.org/flex/index.html.